

HONORABLE CHAIRMAN HAUCK AND MADAME CHAIR KOZBERG

MY NAME IS JAMES HELMER, AND I AM THE DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE CITY OF SAN JOSE. ALTHOUGH, TODAY'S HEARING FOCUSES ON TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON THE STATE'S INTERNAL OPERATIONS, MY REMARKS WILL FOCUS ON HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN IMPROVE SAFETY ON OUR ROADWAYS. TO THIS POINT, WE BELIEVE THE GOVERNOR SHOULD APPOINT A TASK FORCE TO CLOSELY EXAMINE OUR CURRENT VEHICLE CODE PROVISIONS, AND ENFORCEMENT PRACTICES, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE GREATER USE OF TECHNOLOGY..

CALIFORNIA SUFFERED 4,138 DEATHS ON ITS ROADWAYS IN 2002 17 % OF THOSE WERE PEDESTRIANS. SADLY, THESE FIGURES WERE THE HIGHEST IN THE NATION. WHILE, WE CAN MAKE THE CASE THAT THESE STATISTICS ARE MERELY THE RESULT OF CALIFORNIA HAVING THE LARGEST POPULATION AND THE GREATEST NUMBER OF REGISTERED VEHICLES, WE CANNOT BE SATISFIED WITH THESE FIGURES. WE NEED TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF THE NATIONAL SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, NORMAN Y. MINETA AND MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE ALL CASUALTIES ON OUR ROADWAYS. EACH INJURY/FATALITY CRASH THAT OCCURS IMPACTS OUR SOCIETY. THE COSTS TO OUR FAMILIES AND TO THE STATE ARE TOO HIGH.

TRENDING AGAINST NATIONAL STATISTICS SAN JOSE HAS THE SECOND SAFEST RECORD OF PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES OF ANY CITY IN THE NATION WITH A POPULATION OF OVER 750,000. WITH ONE PEDESTRIAN FATALITY PER 100,000 RESIDENTS, SAN JOSE'S TOTAL OF NINE PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES WAS THE LOWEST CITY TOTAL IN THE LAST 10 YEARS. INNOVATION AND STRONG PARTNERSHIPS HAVE LEAD TO THIS SUCCESS.

WE BELIEVE A MAJOR REASON FOR SUCH A LOW FATALITY RATE IS THE USE OF A STRONG EDUCATION PROGRAM, WHICH ENCOURAGES SAFE DRIVING AND WALKING BEHAVIORS TO ALL AGES.

IN ADDITION, THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY NEAR OUR SCHOOLS, SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS, PARKS, LIBRARIES AND OTHER ATTRACTORS WARN MOTORISTS OF UNSAFE DRIVING BEHAVIOR. SAN JOSE IS THE ONLY CITY IN CALIFORNIA THAT UTILIZES PHOTO ENFORCEMENT RADAR FOR SPEED ENFORCEMENT. NASCOP, OR NEIGHBORHOOD AUTOMATED SPEED COMPLIANCE PROGRAM HAS BEEN USED ON APPROXIMATELY 167 LOCAL STREETS OR SCHOOL ZONES WITH A PRIMA FACIE SPEED LIMIT OF 25MPH. THE CITY OPERATES THREE VANS THAT ARE EQUIPPED WITH PHOTO RADAR EQUIPMENT. A TRAINED DOT STAFF MEMBER CONTROLS THE VEHICLE AND SERVES AS A WITNESS TO THE VIOLATION.

FROM THE NASCOP PROGRAM'S INCEPTION IN 1998 WE HAVE SEEN SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN ACTUAL SPEEDS, NUMBERS OF CRASHES AND FREQUENCY OF COMPLAINTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS. THERE ARE COST SAVINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS TYPE OF ENFORCEMENT. WE DO NOT UTILIZE SWORN OFFICERS IN THE PROGRAM, NOR HAVE WE HAD TO INSTALL EXPENSIVE "TRAFFIC CALMING" DEVICES ON LOCAL STREETS TO FORCE MOTORISTS TO SLOW DOWN. THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OVERWHELMINGLY ENDORSE THIS PROGRAM, AND NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE SHOWN STRONG SUPPORT. WHAT WE NEED NOW IS SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION FROM THE STATE THAT ALLOWS COMMUNITIES TO USE TECHNOLOGY TO AID IN THEIR ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS.

CURRENT STATE LAW PUTS SAN JOSE AT RISK OF LOSING THIS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PROGRAM. THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, STATES HAVE ADOPTED PROVISIONS ALLOWING LOCAL AND STATE ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO EXPAND THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ENFORCEMENT.

CALIFORNIA'S USE OF THESE INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES IS BEHIND OTHER STATES.

SAN JOSE WILL BE SUBMITTING A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT TO YOU ON OTHER TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY-RELATED REFORMS THE STATE SHOULD CONSIDER. WE STRONGLY URGE THE FORMATION OF A TASK FORCE TO EXPLORE INNOVATIVE WAYS TO ENFORCE OUR TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN LAWS. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT USING TECHNOLOGY TO MORE VIGOROUSLY ENFORCE EXISTING TRAFFIC RULES WILL HELP IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF CALIFORNIA PEDESTRIANS AND MOTORISTS.